

Cardiac catheterisation is a specific investigation of the heart, it is not a treatment.

On the day of your cardiac catheter go straight to the cardiac department.

The reason for this investigation.

Sometimes, in order to make a definite diagnosis about your heart condition a cardiac catheter is required. The purpose of this investigation is to gain detailed information about the condition of your coronary arteries or heart valves. If your doctor has decided that it is necessary to look in detail at either your coronary arteries or heart valves you will be asked to have a cardiac catheter.

The nature of this investigation.

A cardiac catheter is a special investigation done under sterile conditions using a dye which shows up on X-ray. It is performed in the Cardiac Department within a catheter lab, which is a sterile area, much like an operating theatre, where the staff all wear theatre uniforms to reduce the infection risk. Cardiac catheterisation can be performed from a number of different sites, such as, the inner arm, the wrist or the groin. Your doctor will decide which is the best approach for you.

The benefits of this investigation.

The detailed information which a cardiac catheter provides will be used to aid decisions about the treatment and management of your heart condition.

Having a cardiac catheter.

Prior to your cardiac catheterisation you will receive specific written instructions about any tablets which you need to stop taking and whether or not you need to fast.

It is important that we know which medication you take regularly and which medication, if any, you have stopped taking for the procedure. You will have been given a time for your procedure to take place and every effort will be made to keep to this time. It is however important that you understand that emergencies and unforeseen events may disrupt the planned timing of procedures.

In exceptional circumstances your procedure may have to be cancelled due to an emergency.

Because the procedure is going to take place in a sterile area you will be asked to wear a gown and it may be necessary to shave an area of your skin, but this will depend on which site your doctor is going to use.

Before the procedure, a doctor will come and talk to you to make sure that you know what this investigation involves and you will be asked to sign a consent form. When the procedure begins you will be asked to lie on a narrow bed there will be lots of equipment around you. A local anaesthetic will be used, when this has had time to work, a sheath (short tube) will be inserted into your artery. The sheath allows other smaller tubes or catheters to be passed through it and fed up to your heart. You can not feel the catheters moving inside your blood vessels or inside your heart.

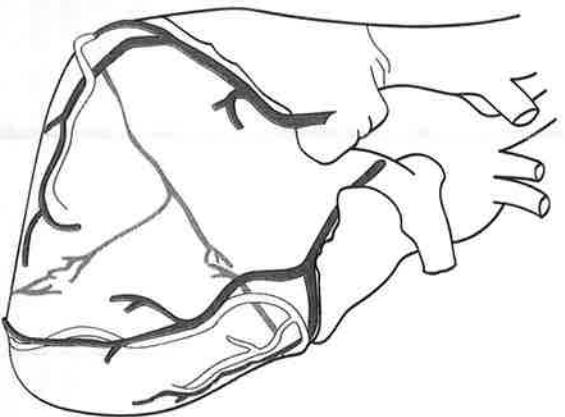
Dye is injected through the catheter and X-ray pictures of your heart will be taken from different angles so that detailed information about your heart can be gained. When the doctor has all the information required the catheter will be removed, sometimes the sheath will also be taken out at this point.

You will then be taken to the recovery area of the cardiac department. If the doctor has not removed the sheath the registered nurse in the recovery area will take it out. After the sheath has been removed pressure has to be applied over the puncture site to prevent you from bleeding. Your management in the time immediately following the cardiac catheterisation will depend on the site which has been used.

The registered nurse in the recovery area will advise you and will provide you with written instructions. You will need to stay in hospital for at least four hours following this procedure and an overnight stay is sometimes necessary. If you have not had any problems during the procedure or recovery period a designated registered nurse will be able to discharge you. If any problems have arisen, however slight, a doctor will be involved in your discharge. You will need someone to stay overnight with you on the day of your cardiac catheter.

The risks of this investigation.

With any treatment, test or procedure there is always a small risk of side effects or complications and a cardiac catheter is no different. Complications following cardiac catheterisation are uncommon, but can be serious. The most likely cause of any problem is the blood vessel which has been punctured to allow the investigation to take place.

**CARDIAC SERVICES
DIRECTORATE****Explaining
Cardiac
Catheterisation**

It is possible that bleeding into the surrounding tissues can take place, this will cause bruising to the area and some discomfort. Serious complications are much less common and effect about 1 in 1000 cases, these include, haemorrhage from the puncture site, stroke caused by a clot, dye reactions, heart rhythm disturbances, infection and kidney failure. The most serious complication which could occur would be a fatal heart attack, but the chances of this happening to you, is less than 1 in 2000. It is fair to say though, that serious complications most often occur in those patients whose heart condition is most serious, but, these are the very people who stand to benefit most from the information which a cardiac catheter will provide.

The discomforts of the investigation.

The dye which is injected to allow the X-ray pictures to be taken may cause a hot, flushing sensation as it is injected, but this soon passes. A local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area which is going to be used, this may sting a little when it is injected.

The alternatives to this investigation.

At the current time there is no alternative method of gaining this detailed information about your heart.

The consequences of not having this investigation.

If you choose not to have this investigation, your symptoms will continue and without this detailed information your doctor will be restricted to managing your condition with medication only.